

## **NOTICE RE TELEPHONIC APPEARANCE PROCEDURES FOR U.S. BANKRUPTCY JUDGE KAREN K. SPECIE**

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Florida has arranged for parties to participate in hearings by telephonic appearance using CourtCall, an independent conference call company. Please note: The Northern District of Florida includes both Central and Eastern time zones. Hearings are noticed for the local time zone, i.e., Gainesville and Tallahassee – Eastern time; Pensacola and Panama City - Central time.

**Under no circumstances may any participant record or broadcast the proceedings conducted by the Bankruptcy Court.**

### **I. POLICY GOVERNING TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES VIA COURTCALL**

**Local counsel must appear in person in all matters before the Court unless the hearing is specifically noticed as a CourtCall hearing. If preferred, parties noticed for Relief From Stay hearings may appear in person in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Courtroom, 110 E. Park Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32301.**

Telephonic appearances via CourtCall are allowed in all matters before the Court **EXCEPT** the following:

1. Trials and evidentiary hearings – all counsel and all witnesses must appear in person;
2. Chapter 11 status conferences – debtor and debtor's counsel must appear in person, other parties in interest may appear telephonically via CourtCall;
3. Chapter 11 confirmation hearings – debtor, debtor's counsel, and all objecting parties must appear in person;
4. Hearings on reaffirmation agreements – debtor must appear in person;
5. Any matter designated by the Court as one requiring a personal appearance.

CourtCall, an independent conference call company, may be used for all other hearings. Refer to *Section II – Scheduling - Telephonic Appearance* for guidance in setting up a telephonic appearance.

If an individual schedules a telephonic appearance via CourtCall and then fails to respond to the call of a matter on calendar, the court may pass the matter or may treat the failure to respond as a failure to appear.

A waiver of the CourtCall fees can be approved for Pro Se parties who have previously been granted IFP status and parties represented by Legal Services (Pro Bono) if requested prior to the hearing and approved by Judge Specie. If such request is approved, the Court will notify CourtCall prior to the hearing of such waiver of fees.

Individuals making use of CourtCall service are cautioned that they do so at their own risk. Hearings generally will not be rescheduled due to missed connections.

## II. SCHEDULING A TELEPHONIC APPEARANCE

By Telephone: Absent an emergency, telephone appearances may be arranged by calling CourtCall at (866) 582-6878 not later than 3:00 p.m. one day prior to the hearing date. Any request for a telephonic appearance made after the 3:00 p.m. deadline must be Court approved by contacting Judge Specie's Judicial Assistant, Martie Kantor, at 850-521-5031.

## III. PROCEDURE FOR TELEPHONIC APPEARANCE

CourtCall will provide counsel with written confirmation of a telephonic appearance and will give counsel a number to call to make the telephonic appearance. It is counsel's responsibility to dial into the call **not later than 10 minutes prior to the start of the scheduled hearing** so that sound quality can be checked and appearances can be communicated to the Judge. CourtCall does not place a call to counsel. The initial charge per participant for a CourtCall appearance is \$30.00. This charge is for the first 45 minutes and then \$7.00 for each additional 15 minute increment. If you do not timely call and connect with the CourtCall operator, you will be billed for the call and the hearing may proceed in your absence.

Telephonic appearances via CourtCall are connected directly with the courtroom's public address system. To ensure the quality of the record, the use of car phones, cellular phones, speakerphones, public telephone booths, or phones in other public places is **expressly prohibited** except in the most extreme emergencies. Participants should be able to hear all parties without difficulty or echo.

At the time of your hearing, you may initially be in the listening mode in which case you will be able to hear the case before yours, just as if you were in the courtroom. After your call is connected to the courtroom, the Judge will call the case, request appearances, and direct the manner in which the hearing proceeds. Each time you speak, you should identify yourself for the record. The court's teleconferencing system allows more than one speaker to be heard, so the Judge can interrupt a speaker to ask a question or redirect the discussion. When the Judge informs the participants that the hearing is completed, you may disconnect and the next case will be called.